



February 7, 2023  
Dominique Cole, DMHAS, Nurse  
SEIU 1199NE

Before the Higher Education and Employment  
Advancement Committee

*In Support of* **SB 936: AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT** *with additions*

*In Support of* **HB 5438: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A DEBT-FREE COLLEGE PROGRAM FOR EMPLOYEES OF DAY CARE FACILITIES, HOME HEALTHCARE AGENCIES AND NURSING HOMES**

Good Afternoon, Senator Slap, Representative Haddad, and members of the Committee. My name is Dominique Cole, and I am currently a Head Nurse with three years of state service. I live in Derby. After many years of working as a Certified Nursing Aide, I completed my nursing degree at the Bridgeport Hospital Nursing School, and I have been a Registered Nurse for the past seven years.

I am currently a Head Nurse at the Adult Program inpatient unit at Connecticut Valley Hospital. We provide care for severely mentally ill young people who are often not stable enough to remain in the community. We provide multidisciplinary care to help them become stable and return to a lower level of care in the community. This is increasingly challenging as the short staffing does not allow us enough resources to be able to do our work in the safest environment. This burden is most acute for nurses as we find ourselves being mandated to do overtime for several shifts per pay period. The chronic shortage of nurses has real consequences for us as exhaustion becomes the norm, and the sense of both personal and professional wellbeing become stretched. This condition is making it difficult to attract new nurses and keep the ones we have now.

I appear before you today to advocate that you add to Senate Bill 936 language that would create pathways for us to expand the pool of nurses by expanding the capacity of nursing programs within the CSCU system; Creating and funding preceptor programs that allow practicing nurses to serve as ongoing role models and mentors; Create loan forgiveness programs that incentivizes both LPN's and RN's to come work for the state with minimum years of service to qualify, and create a working group that includes 1199 members to evaluate nursing curriculum in the state and establish 5 and 10 year recruitment and retention goals for our public sector.

I was a CNA who always had the ambition to expand my scope of care and the Bridgeport Hospital Nursing School provided me the opportunity that allows me to practice as a Registered Nurse today. The passage of SB 936 with these additions and the passage of HB 5438 would allow for those who are looking and hoping to become nurses

to have the opportunity. Our patients need it as do those of us doing our best to provide them with the best care we can.